

## Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2248

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 656

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MR US

SUBJECT: STATE OF MAURITANIAN-US RELATIONS--FAREWELL APPRAISAL

SUMMARY. US-GIRM BILATERAL RELATIONS ARE IN GOOD SHAPE. CONJUNCTURE OF US DROUGHT AID TO THIS COUNTRY WITH OUR ROLE ASSISTING IN RESOLUTION CERTAIN FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS OF MAJOR INTEREST TO GIRM, PARTICULARLY ARAB-ISRAEL, HAS GIVEN REMARKABLE BOOST TO US PRESTIGE. OUR CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN EFFORT ASSIST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WILL DETERMINE CHARACTER OUR FUTURE RELATIONS. LIKELIHOOD IS DISCOURAGING WE CAN HAVE TANGIBLE EFFECT ON MAURITANIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM. HARSHNESS OF ENVIRONMENT AND RIGIDITY OF LOCAL SOCIO-CULTURAL PATTERNS SHARPLY LIMIT HOW MUCH US, OR ANY OUTSIDER, CAN HELP THIS COUNTRY DEVELOP. LEADERSHIP'S PRO-ARAB ORIENTATION HAS WON IT FRESH MEANS TO FINANCE MAJOR PROJECTS BUT ITS CONSENSUS-STYLE DECISION MAKING AND INEPT ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES CONTRIBUTE TO SLOWNESS OF CHANGE. END SUMMARY.

1. ON EVE ENDING MISSION WHICH BEGAN DECEMBER 1971, I SUBMIT FOLLOWING THOUGHTS ON STATE US-MAURITANIAN BILATERAL TIES AND THEIR FUTURE PROSPECTS. CAN AFFIRM OUR RELATIONS ARE IN GOOD SHAPE IN SENSE THAT WE ENJOY A NEW POSITION OF CONFIDENCE AND RESPECT IN THIS CAPITAL FROM WHICH WE WERE SUMMARILY EXPELLED IN 1967, AND WHICH CONTINUES TO FLAUNT CONFIDENTIAL

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ITS UNCRITICAL SUPPORT FOR ALL THIRD WORLD CAUSES.

WE REMAIN FAR APART ON MANY FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. GIRM'S KNEE-JERK ENDORSEMENTS OF NORTH KOREAN, HANOI, SIHANOUK AND AL-FATAH POSITIONS, TO NAME A FEW, REPRESENT EMOTIONAL COMMITMENTS TO THOSE CAUSES WHICH ARE NOT SUSCEPTIBLE TO RATIONAL DISCUSSION. THE PRESIDENT HAS STAKED OUT THE HIGH GROUND OF "INTERNATIONAL MORALITY," ASSERTS HIS SUPPORT FOR THE POOR, THE OPPRESSED, THE "VICTIMS OF IMPERIALISM," ETC. BUT PREFERS AVOID DISCUSSING SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS OF SPECIFIC PROBLEMS. IN TURN, WE HAVE NOT FOUND IT CONVENIENT TO ENTERTAIN HIS OCCASIONAL OFFERS OF MEDIATION ON VARIOUS ISSUES, BUT THIS HAS LEFT NO HARD FEELINGS HERE.

2. YET EVEN ON SENSITIVE FOREIGN POLICY QUESTIONS THERE HAS BEEN SOME PROGRESS. WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED, BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER MOUKNASS PREFERRED AVOID DISCUSSING ISSUES ON WHICH WE DISAGREED, EVIDENTLY CONCERNED THIS SOULD DAMAGE OUR BILATERAL TIES. THEY ARE NOTABLY MORE RELAXED IN SUCH DISCUSSIONS TODAY. INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS OF THE PAST TWO YEARS HAVE EFFECTIVELY REMOVED MUCH GROUND FOR LOCAL COMPLAINT AGAINST OUR WORLD ROLE. THEY FEEL EASIER WITH US SINCE THE VIETNAM SETTLEMENT, AND, ABOVE ALL, SINCE THE VERY START OF THE SECRETARY'S EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS TO MOVE THE NEAR EAST CONFRONTATION TOWARDS RESOLUTION. REFERENCES CRITICAL OF US IN GIRM'S FOREIGN POLICY DECLARATIONS HAVE VIRTUALLY CEASED AND I HAVE NOT HAD ANY CAUSE TO PROTEST LACK OF CIVILITY OVER PAST YEAR.

3. DROUGHT AID. THE EXTENT OF OUR HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS TO COMBAT THE RAVAGES OF THE SAHELIAN DROUGHT HAS PLEASED AND TO A DEGREE UNSETTLED THE LEADERSHIP, WHICH HAS AT TIMES TENDED BELIEVE ITS OWN ANTI-IMPERIALIST RHETORIC CASTING USG AS THE THIRD WORLD'S CONSTANT ADVERSARY. WE HAVE DELIVERED ON OUR AID PLEDGES MORE EFFICIENTLY THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY AND ASKED NO PRICE IN RETURN. PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH AND HIS MINISTERS HAVE REPEATEDLY ACKNOWLEDGED OUR ASSISTANCE WARMLY AND PUBLICLY. AMONG THE GENERAL POPULATION OUR DROUGHT RELIEF EFFORTS ARE WIDELY KNOWN AND APPRECIATED. OUR HELP HAS RECALLED EARLIER MEMORIES OF US GENEROSITY, DATING BACK TO THE BEHAVIOR OF OUR TROOPS IN ATAR DURING WORLD WAR II AND LATER US ASSISTANCE GIVEN THROUGH UN AGENCIES. OUR NEW BILATERAL AID HAS NATURALLY AROUSED HOPES OF MORE TO COME, HOPES WHICH WE

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HAVE SOUGHT TO LIMIT.

4. TO THOSE IN WASHINGTON WHO MAY WONDER WHETHER OUR ASSISTANCE RISKS CORRUPTING THIS POPULATION AND DEFLECTING IT FROM UNDERTAKING ITS OWN REHABILITATION, I WOULD MAINTAIN SUCH IS NOT A DANGER IN THIS BASICALLY ANTI-MATERIALIST SOCIETY. THIS NOMADIC POPULATION HAS ALWAYS LIVED ON THE MARGIN OF EXISTENCE. CASUALLY TO ACCEPT HELP IS AS MUCH A WAY OF LIFE AS IS TO FEED

ONE'S NEIGHBOR IF HE IS WORSE OFF. SHAPED IN ONE OF THE WORLD'S HARSHTEST ENVIRONMENTS WHERE LIFE IN GOOD YEARS IS CHANCEY, MAURITANIANS HAVE SHOWN BOTH AN EXTRAORDINARY STOICISM IN THE FACE OF THEIR PROLONGED TRIAL BY DROUGHT AND A REMARKABLE SPIRIT OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY.

5. THESE SURVIVAL SKILLS ARE UNFORTUNATLY NOT EQUALLY USEFUL PRODS TO SOCIAL CHANGE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. I DEPART UNCONVINCED THAT WE, OR ANY OTHER OUTSIDERS, HAVE YET FOUND THE WAY TO MOVE THIS COUNTRY TOWARDS ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND A NEW LIFE STYLE. THERE ARE SOME HINTS OF SMALL, LOCALIZED CHANGES IN PSYCHOLOGY WHICH WE HAVE TRIED ENCOURAGE THROUGH SELF-HELP PROJECTS. IN MEDIUM TERM, OUR ANIMAL HUSBANDRY PROJECT CONTAINS THE GERM OF REVOLUTION IN ITS CONCEPT OF RANGE AND WELL ROTATION. IF ACCEPTED BY THE POPULATION, THIS RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM TRADITION COULD FOSTER MORE RATIONAL USE OF THIS FRAGILE ECOLOGY AND A BETTER LIFE FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION. I SUBMIT, HOWEVER, WE CAN MAINLY TAKE PRIDE IN KNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE HELPED KEEP THIS POPULATION ALIVE DURING THIS CENTURY'S MOST PROLONGED DROUGHT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 656

6. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE. THE LEADERSHIP'S APPETITE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND PARTICULARLY COSTLY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS, IS ENORMOUS. WE WILL HAVE TO COPE WITH THIS DIRECTLY IN JULY AT THE OMVS DONORS' CONFERENCE WHERE GIRM

AND ITS RIVERINE NEIGHBORS WILL TABLE AID REQUESTS FOR PROJECTS COSTING UPWARDS OF DOLLARS TWO HUNDRED MILLION. IN ITS EFFORT TO ASSERT CONTROL OVER THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC DESTINY, THE LEADERSHIP MAY ACTUALLY HAVE HURT DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN. A LITTLE CHAUVINISM GOES A LONG WAY HERE; LAST YEAR'S REORIENTATION AWAY FROM FRANCE, PARTICULARLY LEAVING THE FRANC ZONE AND MAURITANIZING LOCAL COMPANIES, HAS BEEN COSTLY. SOME FOREIGN COMMERCIAL FIRMS HAVE ALREADY CLOSED, BOUGHT-UP BY NATIONALS WHOSE GREED AT LEAST MATCHES THE EXPATRIATES' BUT WHOSE COMPETENCE IS LESS THAN THAT OF THE FRENCHMAN AND THE "LITTLE LEB" WHOM THE AUTHORITIES ARE QUICK TO DISPARAGE. HARRASSMENT OF SENEGALESE WORKERS THROUGH CURRENCY CONTROL AND WORK PERMITS HAS CREATED NEW TENSIONS WITH THAT KEY NEIGHBOR. THE GOVERNMENT HAS FORTUNATELY STRUCK COMPROMISES WITH THE TWO MAJOR MINING INTERESTS HERE, THE SOURCE OF 75 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE. THERE IS NO PRESENT INDICATION THAT EITHER IS PLANNING TO THROW IN THE TOWEL AND FOLLOW CERTAIN SMALL ENTREPRENEURS OUT OF THE COUNTRY. US TRADE AND SALE OF SERVICES HAS BEEN UNAFFECTED AND CONTINUES TO GROW SATISFACTORILY, LIMITED  
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ONLY BY THE SMALL SIZE OF THIS MARKET.

7. DOMESTIC RACIAL TENSIONS CONTRIBUTE A FURTHER BRAKE ON DEVELOPMENT. THE OFFICIAL POLICY OF ESTABLISHING CLOSER TIES WITH THE ARAB WORLD, WHILE CLAIMING TO MAINTAIN MAURITANIA'S TRADITIONAL ROLE AS BRIDGE BETWEEN BLACK AND ARAB AFRICA IS GREETED WITH SKEPTICISM BY THE SUBSTANTIAL BLACK MINORITY. HOWEVER, EVEN THEY ADMIT THAT THIS ORIENTATION HAS YIELDED SIGNIFICANT TANGIBLE BENEFITS IN RECENT MONTHS AND THEY SHARE HOPES OF THEIR MOORISH FELLOW CITIZENS THAT ARAB WORLD GENEROSITY IS JUST BEGINNING.

8. BUREAUCRATIC INEPTNESS. ACHIEVEMENT OF MORE RAPID ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS A RADICAL OVERHAUL OF DEMANDS MADE ON GIRM SENIOR OFFICIALS. THE CABINET IS A GROUP OF CHARMING AND ARTICULATE FUND RAISERS WHO BY AND LARGE ARE CARELESS ADMINISTRATORS. ACTUALLY THEY HAVE LIMITED CHANCE TO DISPLAY ANY EXECUTIVE TALENTS SINCE IT IS A FIXED POLICY OF THE PRESIDENT TO JOIN EVERY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AND BE REPRESENTED AT EVERY MEETING. THE LEADERSHIP IS CONTINUALLY CIRCUIT RIDING, A HABIT WHICH INFECTS SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS AND TECHNICIANS AS WELL. RELUCTANCE TO DELEGATE AUTHORITY IS ENDEMIC AND CONTRIBUTES TO LONG PERIODS OF PARALYSIS AFFECTING ON-GOING AND NEW PROGRAMS ALIKE. OULD DADDAH'S POLICY OF WINNING HEARINGS FOR HIS COUNTRY IN ARAB, AFRICAN AND WORLD FORUMS WAS BORN OUT OF NEED TO SECURE MAURITANIA'S VERY EXISTENCE IN EARLY YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE. THIS SITUATION HAS NOW CHANGED AND COUNTRY'S PRIORITY NEED IS FOR

TRAINED ADMINISTRATORS WHO WILL STICK CLOSER TO HOME BASE.

9. ONE UNDOUBTED STRENGTH OF THIS GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ITS POLITICAL STABILITY. LED SINCE INDEPENDENCE BY THE SAME PRESIDENT, WHO IS STILL ASSISTED BY MANY OF HIS ORIGINAL MINISTERS FROM THE EARLY SIXTIES, MAURITANIA HAS ESCAPED THE UPHEAVALS OF MANY THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES. CONCENSUS DECISION MAKING REMAINS OLD DADDAH'S GOVERNING STYLE. HIS DOOR AND THOSE OF HIS MINISTERS REMAIN OPEN TO ALL PETITIONERS. CONVERSELY PUBLIC IS AWARE OF THE EFFICIENCY OF HIS INFORMATION NETWORK, OPERATING THROUGH THE SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY AND THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION, AND THIS AWARENESS HAS SERVED INHIBIT DEVELOPMENT OF ANY ORGANIZED POLITICAL OPPOSITION. MILITARY BY ALL APPEARANCES IS FECKLESS AND UNCRITICAL OF CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP. CONFIDENTIAL

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EVEN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE NOW POLITICALLY QUIESCENT.

10. NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS. TO MOVE TO A BETTER FUTURE, HOWEVER, COUNTRY NEEDS MORE THAN FOREIGN AID, EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATORS, AND EVEN POLITICAL STABILITY. BEFORE THE DROUGHT THE GOVERNMENT NEVER TOUCHED THE LIVES OF THE LARGE MAJORITY OF ITS PEOPLE. THE GIRM EXERCISED ITS SOVEREIGNTY MAINLY IN NOUAKCHOTT WHILE THE MOOR CONTINUED IN HIS ANCIENT NOMADIC WAYS. HIT BY THE DROUGHT AND THE PROSPECT OF STARVATION, THE NOMAD HAS FLED TO THE TOWNS WHERE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE HAS HAD SUSTAINED, DIRECT CONTACT WITH HIS GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE DISTRIBUTION OF EMERGENCY FOOD. THE MOOR MAY FOR THE FIRST TIME HAVE BEGUN TO UNDERSTAND THAT HE IS ALSO A MAURITANIAN. WHETHER GIRM LEADERSHIP CAN BUILD ON THIS NEW PERCEPTION AND CREATE A POPULAR MENTALITY THAT WILL SHRUG OFF THE DEAD WEIGHT EXERTED BY THE TRADITIONS OF AN INTRICATE, INBRED SOCIETY REMAINS UNPROVEN. MURPHY

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